NEW NICK CARTER WEEKLY

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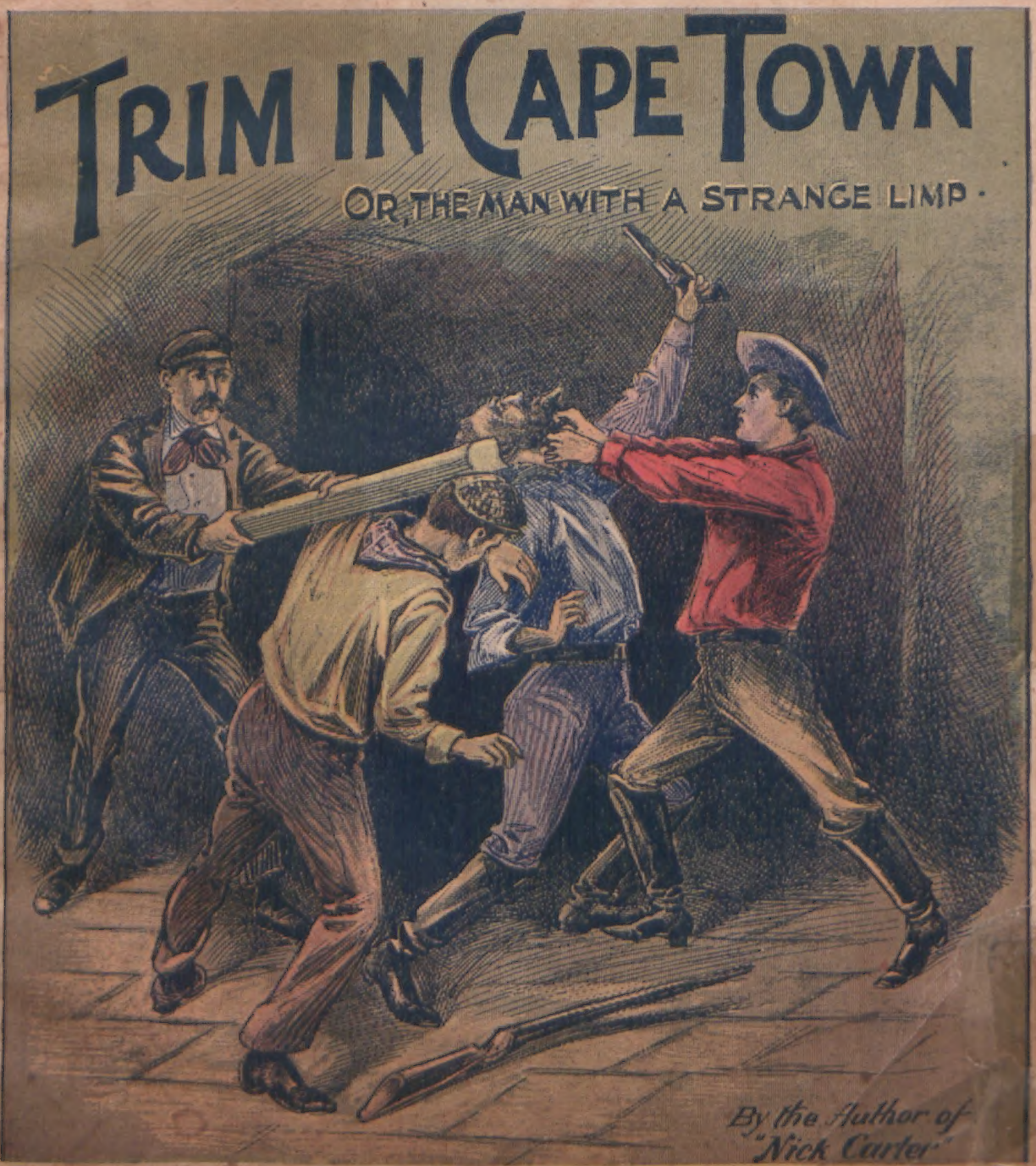
TRIM IN CAPE TOWN

OR, THE MAN WITH A STRANGE LIMP.



By the Author of "Nick Carter"

TRIM GRASPED HIS ADVERSARY BY THE THROAT.

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TRIM IN CAPE TOWN;

OR,

The Man With a Strange Limp

By the Author of "NICK CARTER."

CHAPTER I.

TURNING ON THE HOT WATER.

The royal mail steamship *Malta* steamed into the harbor of Cape Town, South Africa, just as the sun was setting on a warm evening in February.

On that side of the world February is a warm month; it comes just at the close of summer and long before the chills of autumn have set in.

The *Malta* was bound from Melbourne and other Australian ports to Southampton, England.

Among her passengers was a young American who had plunged unexpectedly into detective work in Alaska several months before, and who had continued his investigations in Australia during the first part of the year.

Trim, who had become a general favorite with the passengers, had declared more than once that he was on his way home.

He meant what he said, and was inclined to laugh at the good-humored wagers of some of the men who had heard of his exploits to the effect that he couldn't go on shore anywhere without getting mixed up in crime hunting.

The boy had no objection whatever to pursuing his chosen calling further wherever the work might lie, for he had finally determined that he would make detective work his business.

Nevertheless, he honestly intended to do nothing more at it until he should have arrived at New York and consulted with his father and Nick Carter as to the best method of entering regularly upon the profession.

It was his intention to stop over in Cape Town and take the next northbound steamer in order to have a few days in which to see South African people and places.

As the steamer dropped anchor to await the visit of quarantine officials before proceeding to her dock, Trim stood on the main deck forward, leaning upon the rail and watching the distant town.

Back of it was the famous Table Mountain, of which he had read many times, and it was even now partly hidden by a perfectly white cloud that made its appearance to a gigantic dining table most striking.

It is a long run from Melbourne across the Indian Ocean to Cape Town, and during the many days that they had been

out of sight of land Trim had passed much of his time in the forecastle.

Being a sensible lad, he soon had wearied of the flattering talk of the passengers, and he cared little for their games of cards in the smoking room.

He took great pleasure in shuffle board, a game played on the open deck, but that could not always be played, so he had made acquaintances among the crew, and his presence in their dingy quarters forward was always welcome.

Among them there was none that he liked better than old Jack Dobbin, a man who had been all over the world and who knew his way in every port.

He was an old-time salt. A man who never rose higher than his humble position before the mast, but who had had a host of adventures.

His tongue could spin a yarn with the best of them. Trim had listened eagerly to the old fellow's stories, and in various ways had won Dobbin's favor.

The result was that they were close friends, and often, when Dobbin was not on duty, they passed hours together seated upon a coil of rope or a hatch, Trim listening while the old salt told him of wrecks and hurricanes, collisions and exciting adventures on shore.

The crew of the *Malta* was not made up entirely of Englishmen or Scotchmen; among them were several Asiatics.

These fellows went about their work silently and seldom talked with their white companions.

Trim had asked Dobbin how they came to be on board.

"Oh," the old fellow answered, indifferently, "I suppose they're just as good men to put before the mast as a hulk like me. They can pull at a rope's end and scrub the deck as well as I can. Why shouldn't they be here?"

"No reason at all," Trim returned; "but they don't seem to be like the rest of the crew."

"No, and they're not!" exclaimed Dobbin, with some energy.

"It's not for me to say who should be shipped before the mast on any craft I sail on, but harkee, lad, when the *Malta* gets into port I look for another ship if these Malays are to be kept here."

Not another word would the old fellow say about his dark-colored shipmates.

It was perfectly evident that he had a violent prejudice against them, but he would not explain it.

Trim believed that there must be some story back of his ill feeling, but nothing could induce Dobbin to tell it.

Trim had not tried to make him tell it, for the reason that Dobbin had plenty of other tales always at command; and the loss of one more or less was of no consequence.

For a day or two after Dobbin had first expressed his dislike of the Malays Trim had watched them quietly, but he was unable to observe that they cared any more or less for Dobbin than for any other member of the crew.

They seemed to be quiet, faithful men, and so the boy had ceased minding them at all.

He believed that Dobbin's dislike was more due to the prejudice of whites against colored people than for any other reason.

At this time the Malays were busy about the deck with other sailors; there was not much to do, but the bos'n kept them all hustling at one thing or another as if the safety of the ship depended on it.

The *Malta* had hardly come to anchor before she was approached by several small boats.

The quarantine officers came out in a tug and were speedily on board.

The other boats that came to the steamship were rowboats carrying generally two or three persons who had various articles that they wished to sell to the passengers.

There were fruits, shells, canes, small manufactured articles, etc., which many of the passengers were glad to buy for the sake of carrying home something that had come from Africa.

Such traders are to be found in almost every port on the other side of the world.

In some places when a steamer is to stop for several hours they are allowed to come on board.

In Cape Town, at least on this occasion, they were not permitted to board the steamer.

Accordingly they rowed around and

around the steamer, holding up their hands and trying to make sales by shouting out the prices, tossing the article on board and receiving the money for it when thrown by the passengers.

Some little business was done in this way, for quite a number of the passengers were eager to buy.

The officers of the steamship, however, for some reason or other did not like the proceeding, and gave orders that the boatmen should keep at a distance.

These orders were shouted from the rail by the bos'ns, but the men in the small boats paid little attention.

Wherever they saw a knot of passengers leaning over the rail they rowed their boats there, and kept up a constant yelling as they tried to drive bargains.

At last the captain impatiently ordered that hose be attached to the boilers and streams of hot water turned upon the small boats so as to keep them away from the ship's sides.

It so happened that Dobbin had charge of a hose pipe.

His brown face was on the grin as he directed a stream of hot water in one direction and another, sometimes wetting the traders alongside and in all instances compelling them to retreat.

Half a dozen streams were turned upon the small boats from various parts of the ship, but in spite of that the traders persisted in coming close under the rail and driving such bargains with the passengers as they could.

Trim was greatly amused by the scene, although his sympathy was considerably aroused for the poor boatmen.

He could not see that they were doing any harm and wondered why the officers should insist upon keeping them at a distance.

Presently his attention was attracted by a boat containing half a dozen men that had circled all around the steamer two or three times, but without coming close enough to permit of any bargaining.

The men in the boat all had their eyes directed to the steamer's decks, as if they were looking for somebody.

At first Trim supposed that they were traders like the rest, but after a time he observed that they had nothing in their boat, which was a large one, for sale.

Then he thought that they might have friends among the passengers, but again this did not seem likely, for they all had dark faces, ragged clothes, and the general appearance of uncivilized natives.

Once Trim saw that Dobbin had his eyes on these men and that he was looking at them in a displeased way.

"Those fellows look more like Malays than Africans, don't they, Dobbin?" Trim asked.

Dobbin shrugged his shoulders, but made no reply. The sailor's attention was just then taken by an energetic trader who had pushed his boat almost under him.

Dobbin turned his hose of hot water upon the trader, and for the next half minute or so was occupied in driving the fellow away.

Trim watched that proceeding for a moment, and then glanced again at the boat containing the dark men.

They were resting on their oars, and two of them were gesturing with their hands.

They were waving them in such a way that it was very apparent that they had discovered somebody on board whom they knew, and it looked as if they were trying to give them some kind of instructions.

Just as most persons will turn their heads if they see somebody looking intently in a certain direction, Trim looked around to make out what the dark-skinned men were doing.

His boyish curiosity served a good purpose.

As he turned he saw that the Malays in the crew were in a group not far from him.

They had their eyes upon the men in the boat, and as the latter waved their hands they looked along the deck toward the spot where Dobbin was standing with the hose pipe.

Then one of the Malays made a quick gesture, pointing toward Dobbin, and looking inquiringly at the boat.

The men there nodded and sat down, laying their hands upon the oars as if they were ready to row away at an instant's notice.

This struck Trim as very peculiar, and he was on the alert for something to hap-

pen, although he did not dream how serious the situation had become.

He saw the Malays on board the *Malta* separate, all but one going aft and disappearing around the corner of the deck house; the other, who apparently had nothing to do at the moment, walked slowly across the deck, gradually drawing near to where Dobbin was handling the hose.

Trim pretended to be absorbed in watching the traders dodge the hot water, but in reality he kept his eyes sharply upon the Malay.

Suddenly he caught the gleam of a knife half concealed in the Malay's hand.

The boy instantly jumped, and at the same moment the Malay raised his knife and leaped toward Dobbin, whose back was turned to both of them.

The Malay had a little the start of Trim and reached Dobbin first.

He seized the old sailor by the collar of his jacket and whirled him around, evidently with the intention of getting a chance to strike at his breast.

If he had chosen to stab the sailor in the back Trim would have been too late; as it was, the lad had just time to catch the Malay's wrist as it descended.

The blow was struck with terrific force, but Trim managed to turn it aside, so that the main damage it did was to slit Dobbin's jacket from throat to hem.

The old sailor, greatly startled, stood perfectly still for just one instant, his mouth agape, his hands still holding the hose nozzle.

Meantime the Malay, enraged at the failure of his blow, turned his attention to Trim.

Trim had both his hands upon the Malay's right wrist. With his left hand the Malay caught Trim by the throat and pressed him against the rail, struggling fiercely to free his right hand so that he might use the knife.

In all his previous encounters Trim had never met a foe more difficult to manage than this one.

The Malay was as supple as a snake, and his grip was like steel; moreover, he seemed to be perfectly desperate and willing to risk everything for the sake of getting in a fatal blow.

Trim tried to trip him, but in vain. He dared not let go the fellow's wrist, and in fact it took all his strength to keep that murderous right arm from doing its deathly work.

It seemed as if the fingers upon his throat would press through the skin, so fierce was the Malay's grip.

This situation could not have lasted long in any case, and it was less likely to when there were so many on board who would gladly have gone to Trim's assistance.

There was no need of any one to come, however, for Dobbin's amazement lasted but a second; then with a great shout of wrath he used the best weapon he had at his command.

Instead of trying to strike the Malay or to grapple with him, he turned his hot-water hose full upon the fellow's face!

With a wild shriek of pain as the scalding water struck him, the Malay let go his grip, dropped his knife, and staggered back.

He was speedily collared and bound by half a dozen sailors who had run up, while Trim staggered breathless to a hatch and leaned there for a moment gasping.

"Well, shiver my bows!" roared Dobbin, coming up to Trim, "if that ain't the closest sweep I ever had, and the worstest.

"Be ye hurt, lad?"

"No, I'm all right," Trim responded, "but I thought I never was going to breathe again. What's the meaning of it all?"

"Ah!" growled Dobbin, with a fierce look over the rail, "I understand now why those black varmints came prowling about the ship."

Trim looked over the rail, too, and saw that the dark-skinned men in the large boat were just assisting the Malay members of the crew into it.

These fellows had leaped overboard and swam to their companions in the rowboat.

It was undoubtedly the intention of the fellow who had attempted to murder Dobbin to get in his fatal blow and leap overboard, too.

Before the officers of the *Malta* half understood what had happened, the boat containing the Malay members of the crew was rowed away.

CHAPTER II.

DOBBIN EXPLAINS.

"Did he try to do for you, Dobbin?" asked one of the under officers who came hurrying to the scene.

"Ay, sir, he did," responded the sailor, "an' but for this young gentleman I should now be carryin' a knife in me heart."

"So I hear—so I hear," the officer said.

"You showed good sense and courage, young man; but what does it all mean, Dobbin? What kind of trouble have you been having with the Malay?"

"No trouble at all, sir."

"Eh, what's that? Then why should he attack you?"

"That's for him to say."

The sailor gave his answers in a stubborn tone, as if he were determined that no information should be gained from him concerning the cause of the assault.

The officer was impatient, for he perceived Dobbin was not inclined to speak freely, but he said nothing more about it at the time because the confusion aroused by the incident gave him plenty else to do.

The boldness of the attack struck everybody as something very extraordinary.

It was almost like striking a man down in the street at noon, yet it was very clear that the assault had been planned long in advance.

There could be no doubt, from the action of the men who had rowed out from Cape Town, that the Malays on board the *Malta* had shipped as common seamen for the very purpose of committing murder.

It appeared also that they were not certain as to who should be their victim until their confederates in the rowboat had pointed him out.

So much of the extraordinary affair was reasonably plain to any observer; beyond that all was mystery, except possibly to Dobbin himself.

Why should these men have singled out an ordinary sailor for murder, and what should have led them to take such desperate measures? For it was almost certain that they would be overhauled and captured before arriving at Cape Town.

For that matter their arrest on land would be almost certain to follow.

Trim was as curious about this as anybody else, but he kept his tongue still, being quite certain that Dobbin would eventually tell him all about the affair.

If he had had the authority to do so, Trim would have dispatched a boat instantly in pursuit of the Malays.

It took so much time for the chief officers of the *Malta* to realize just what had occurred that the Malays had got more than half way ashore before the steam tug that had brought out the quarantine officials was dispatched in pursuit of them.

By that time it was growing dark, and the rowboat could hardly be distinguished by the passengers.

It was making for a part of the harbor that was thickly dotted with small craft; most of these were fishing boats lying at anchor.

The tug went in among them, but found no trace of the Malays or their boat.

There was nothing remarkable in this, for there was nobody on the tug who was connected with the police, and no one, therefore, who had any especial experience in the chasing of criminals.

There is no doubt that an energetic and experienced police officer could have run the rascals down within an hour after the assault on board the *Malta*.

The officers on the tug, however, having no authority to board any of the fishing vessels, hesitated to take energetic action.

They preferred to report the matter to the police on shore and leave the responsibility to them.

The matter was reported on shore, and the police promptly took measures to arrest such of the Malays as had deserted from the *Malta*.

Meantime the one who had attacked Dobbins had been put in irons and locked up in the brig.

The law required that he should be taken before the authorities on shore, and accordingly, as soon as the quarantine officials had completed their inspection and their tug had returned accompanied by the police boat, the prisoner was removed from the ship.

It was necessary under the circumstances that there should be witnesses to the affair before the court of inquiry.

Trim, of course, had to be one of these witnesses. He had no objection whatever to this, as it would not cause any delay whatever to his plans.

Naturally Dobbin was the other principal witness, and it seemed at first as if he would be seriously inconvenienced, for the *Malta* was to sail early on the following morning.

The court of inquiry at which Dobbin would have to give his testimony could not well take place until after the ship's sailing.

There proved to be no trouble on this point, for Dobbin expressed an eager desire to leave the *Malta* and take his chances of getting a berth on some other ship.

Trim wondered a little at the old sailor's eagerness to leave the *Malta*.

"I should think," thought Trim, "that he'd feel safer on board; now that the Malays have left the steamer, there are no enemies of his among the crew, while on land there is still chance that he would be risking his life while any of that gang are at large."

Dobbin did not say a word to explain his conduct until all the arrangements had been made by which he received an honorable discharge from services on the *Malta*.

This was late in the evening, and after the steamer had gone to her berth at the docks.

Trim had lingered to see how Dobbin's affair would come out.

The old sailor breathed a sigh of relief as he approached the young fellow and said:

"I've got me discharge papers, lad, an' I'm a free man."

"I suppose you'll ship on another vessel at the first opportunity?" remarked Trim.

"Nay, nay, I'm thinkin' not."

"Why shouldn't you'?"

"Well, I'll tell 'ee. Them Malays has got it in for me, an' even if they're all caught by the police, they can't all be locked up."

"Why not?"

Trim knew perfectly well why, but he preferred to ask the question in order to find whether Dobbin really appreciated the situation.

"Why, it's this way, lad. Him as tried to do for me can be held an' put in the jug for a long term of years, an' them as jumped from the ship can be hauled up for deserters, an' they can be locked up for shorter terms, but what has anybody got agin' the scoundrels who were in the boat alongside?"

"Well," said Trim, thoughtfully, "I should say that a certain bold seaman known as John Dobbin probably has a good deal against those same men in the boat alongside."

"Ay, ay, so he has, lad."

"And can't that same Dobbin give testimony that will bring about the locking up of the whole gang?"

"No, lad."

Dobbin shook his head gloomily as he spoke.

"Then," said Trim, "I should think the healthiest thing for Jack Dobbin to do would be to stay on the *Malta*."

"Let me tell 'ee, lad; I'll be frank with 'ee. I've lived a long life, an' a worthless one to all but meself. There's nobody dependin' on me, an' while I'm not lookin' to be kilt by a Malay or any other man, I'm goin' to make me life as useful as I can to him as deserves it."

"I don't believe I understand you."

"Nay, perhaps not. Listen, then.

"I'd fight for me life if I was attacked. I think that much of it, but I know this: them Malays will not only lay for me, but they'll lay for the young man that saved me life this afternoon.

"Do 'ee understand now? Whether 'ee like it or not, lad, I'm goin' to be yer watchdog as long as ye're on this shore. I'll follow ye 'round an' sleep on yer door mat if you'll let me, an' if ye won't, I'll haunt yer lodgin' all the nights an' be yer shadder durin' the day.

"Do ye understand now? But for ye I'd be a dead man this minute. I know that the Malays that can't be locked up even if the police catches them will try to do for ye. I'm goin' to stop 'em if I can."

Trim was greatly impressed by the old fellow's loyalty.

"That's talking like a good fellow, as

I know you are," he said, giving the old fellow his hand.

"If I'd known what you were up to I'd have told you to stay on the *Malta*, but as long as you've got your discharge, all I'll say is that for as long as I'm in Africa we'll be chums."

"That's right, lad; ye couldn't shake me off if ye tried, an' it's better that we should understand each other.

"I owe it to 'ee now to tell 'ee why them rascally Malays tried to murder me."

"Let's get away from here first," said Trim.

They were still at the dock.

Dobbin made no objection to the boy's suggestion, and accordingly within half an hour they were at a hotel.

When they were in a room by themselves Trim asked:

"Weren't you on the look out for something of this kind during the whole voyage, Dobbin?"

"Nay," he answered.

"I'd me eyes open for the first week of it, but I saw nothing to make me suspicious.

"There are thousands of Malays, ye know, who follow the sea, an' I'd no reason to suppose that these fellers knew me."

"They didn't know you. It's as plain as day now that they didn't know who to attack until they got word from their friends in the boat."

"That's right, lad, an' this is how it came about:

"Ten years ago I was before the mast on the *Dunmore Castle*. This was a steamer that touched at about every port in the Indian Ocean as well as most of those on this side of the Pacific. I was with that steamer for a long time.

"She was a tramp, an' as she had no regular sailin' routes we were brought into stranger places than the ordinary traveler sees.

"Well, to keep me yarn down to just what belongs to it, there was a time when a desperate band of Malay pirates tried to get possession of the ship.

"We had a good bit of a fight with 'em. We beat them off and then pursued them among the islands in the Malay Archipelago.

"They escaped us because their vessel was lighter than ours, an' so could go into shallower waters.

"At that time we had on a cargo to be left at Manila, an' when we arrived at that port we found business dull an' no cargo to be had at terms that would pay for the haulin'; so the captain of the *Dunmore Castle*, who was the principal owner of the boat, decided to look for freight somewhere else.

"It was none of our business—I mean we in the crew—what he did or where he went, an' ye must remember that as I go on to tell 'ee what happened.

"A common sailor, lad, has to obey orders; it don't matter what the orders be, he must obey them."

"I understand that," said Trim. "Where did the captain go?"

"He took us straight back into the archipelago where we had chased the pirates.

"None of us suspected what he was up to, but as I've no mind to mystify 'ee I'll tell 'ee that often an' often, as we were spinnin' yarns in the fo'c'sle, we spoke of this adventure with the pirates an' of the fact that on the deck of the pirate ship we had seen a mighty handsome girl.

"She was dark skinned like the Malays, undoubtedly a Malay herself; in fact, as we afterward learned, she was the daughter of the pirate captain."

"So there was a romance mixed up with it?" remarked Trim.

"Ay, call it romance if ye will, lad; ye may call it different when I'm through.

"As we sailed along we had no thought of the pirates, except that once in a while some one would wonder if we should have another brush with them.

"None of us thought it likely, for the very good reason that they would know our ship an' would be slow to attack us a second time."

Dobbin paused and Trim asked:

"In spite of that did you come across them?"

"Ay, we did, but not by their seekin'.

"For two or three days the captain cruised around among some small islands, changin' his course at about every hour,

an' all the time standin' on the bridge with his glass to his eye.

"One evenin' we dropped anchor. We stood about a mile from the shore of an island that, so far as we common sailors could see, was not inhabited.

"What we were there for we could not guess, but 'twas pretty certain that somethin' unusual was goin' on.

"The captain paced up an' down the promenade deck in company with the second officer, a young chap with whom he was very chummy.

"It was the first officer's watch, an' he seemed to have no part or knowledge in the captain's plan.

"Darkness comes on sudden in that latitude, as perhaps ye know, lad, an' by four bells 'twas as black as midnight; the sea was perfectly still.

" 'Twas unusual enough for us to drop anchor in such an out-of-the-way spot, an' that aroused a plenty of questions, as ye can well understand; but can ye imagine what a wonderment there was on board when orders came at sundown to hoist no lights?"

"Why," exclaimed Trim, "that's against all the rules of the sea, isn't it?"

"I should think it were, lad. The meanest craft on the ocean has to hoist a lantern at night, an' here was a big steamer that should have had its position marked plainly, an' not one light would the captain allow to be run up.

"Ye may guess that there was some growlin' in the fo'c'sle, an' more than one of us swore that we would leave the ship so soon as ever we could get our discharge papers an' never go aboard of her agin; still it was nothin' to us so long as we got out of it safely.

" 'Twas simply right to obey orders, an' when at four bells the word came to raise anchor, not a man was there but did what he was told without a murmur.

"I speak of all this, though ye are familiar with ways at sea, from havin' traveled so much, because I'd have 'ee understand that every man on the *Dunmore Castle* had a sense that somethin' wrong was goin' on."

CHAPTER III.

THE REVENGEFUL MALAY.

"They must have thought your captain was going to turn pirate himself," suggested Trim.

"Nay, nay, lad; that wasn't in our minds, but we didn't know what to think.

"Well, anchor was raised, an' without a solitary light burnin' we plowed along very slowly for perhaps three-quarters of an hour.

"There were no lighthouses or bell buoys thereabout to give us warnin' of danger spots, an' the sailin' was purty much by guesswork, though there were two gangs of men who were kept busy every minute droppin' the lead.

"For the first half hour the lead showed that there was water enough under us; then we began to get into shallows; still the steamer plowed on, an' it wasn't until the lead showed less than two fathoms under our keel that the captain gave the order to drop anchor again.

"Down she went.

"The captain an' the second officer," responded Dobbin, "went about givin' orders themselves an' talkin' in low tones, for all the world as if they were at a funeral.

"I heard the captain say to the second officer:

" 'Now, Jones, pick a crew of eight men; get the best there are, an' send them to No. 3.'

"No. 3, ye must understand, was the lifeboat just aft amidships on the starboard side.

"Jones, the second officer, went about the decks speakin' to a man here an' there; presently he comes to me.

" 'Ah, Dobbin,' says he, 'you're a trusty sailor if ever there was one.'

" 'Ay, sir,' says I, 'I understand seafarin' a bit, sir.'

" 'Go to No. 3,' says he, 'an' report to the captain.'

" 'Ay, ay, sir,' says I, an' off to No. 3 I went.

"There was the captain standin' by, while half a dozen men was lowerin' No. 3 from the davits.

"Of course I obeyed, an' in a couple of minutes we'd the lifeboat in the sea.

"By that time Jones had come up with a couple of other men; then we all went

over the ship's side an' took our places at the oars. The captain an' the second officer were in the stern.

"Just before we pulled away the captain whispered a command to the bos'n who was leaning over the rail.

"'Send up a rocket,' says he, 'when you hear a pistol shot.'

"'Ay, ay, sir,' says the bos'n.

"'Give way,' whispered the captain.

"We dug our oars into the water an' off we went.

"With our backs in the direction to which we were goin' we couldn't tell anythin' about where we was comin' to, but purty soon we got the whispered order to up oars, an' the next second we were grating on the bottom.

"We had landed on a sandy beach. There was the tiniest kind of a surf rollin', so little that it made but a faint ripple an' would not have overturned an eggshell if it had been floatin' there.

"Two of the men was ordered to get out an' drag the boat higher up; they did this, an' then we all got out.

"We stood there for a minute on the beach while the captain picked out six men to go with him an' the second officer.

"I could see that the island we had landed on was well wooded, but there was no tellin' what it was like or how big it was.

"Presently the captain had his men picked out.

"Me an' one other were to wait at the boat. The tide was almost at its height; in half an hour it would begin to ebb.

"'If we don't get back by then,' the captain whispered to me, 'push the boat out as the tide runs so as to keep her always in the water, an' be able to jump in at a second's warnin' an' row for yer lives.'

"After that the captain an' the second officer, with the rest of the boat's crew, started directly into the woods at the top of the beach.

"Now, I can't give 'ee a very good story about what happened to the captain an' the men who went into the woods with him, because I wasn't there.

"I stuck to me place by the boat. Me shipmates told me about it afterward, but each one of them had a different story to tell, an' they were so excited that I never could rightly make out just how they did it, so I suppose I'd better stick to me own yarn."

"Well, then, the captain an' the men were a long time comin' back; the tide began to ebb, an' we had to push the boat out to keep it from bein' left high an' dry on the beach.

"Not heatin' no bells, we couldn't tell anythin' about what time it was or how long had passed, but I know that we had twice shoved the boat further out, an' were just makin' ready to push her out still further, when we heard a lot of savage yellin' somewhere off in the woods.

"'The devil is to pay at last!' says me shipmate.

"'Ay, ay,' says I, 'an' if we don't get this boat well into the water the devil will have us as well as the rest of them.'

"Ye may guess that we were both wildly excited. We shoved the boat out until we stood up to our knees in the water an' then held her with our faces turned toward the shore.

"We heard the yellin' continued, an' above it two or three pistol shots.

"The noise was comin' nearer. While we was lookin' in the darkness for any sign of our men we noticed a little gleam upon the water beside us.

"Turnin' our heads around, we saw the flare of a rocket that had been sent up from the ship.

"The bos'n had heard the captain's pistol shots, an' had taken it to be the signal.

"The rocket, of course, was to show just where the ship lay, an' you understand by this time why it was that no lights were put out an' why the bells were stopped. The captain didn't want the people on the island to suspect that a steamer was so near.

"Well, after the rocket went up there was more pistol shots an' more yellin', an' from that time on rockets went up from the ship every half minute.

"Presently out from the woods there came dashin' a party of men.

"Two of them in the front was carryin' a big burden; the others was spread out behind 'em fightin' off pursuers.

"There was shots enough exchanged for a good-sized battle, but in the dark I

suppose nobody could take aim, an' for that matter I don't think that either our men or the others were sharpshooters.

"Anyhow, the two who was carryin' the burden got to the boat; one was the second officer an' the other a sailor; they ran into the water an' put their burden down in the bottom of the boat.

"I could see what it was; it was a girl.

"'Give 'em a last volley!' I heard the captain yell, an' with that there was three or four pistol shots close by me.

"There was pistol shots from further away, too, an' although I'd plenty to do in handlin' the boat, I could make out the forms of a number of men rushin' out from the cover of the trees.

"There was flashes from that direction, an' the next instant somebody lurched agin' me an' fell into the water. It proved to be the captain.

"I lifted him into the stern, an' the other sailors tumbled somehow into the boat an' grabbed the oars.

"We went off to the tune of dashin' 'em on shore an' a spinterin' of bullets in the water alongside.

"Somehow or other none of us was hit, although the boat was chipped in two or three places.

"The captain was a plucky one; he had a bullet in his shoulder, but he never uttered a groan even while we were liftin' him on board the *Dunmore Castle* after we got there.

"He kept command of the ship, ordered up the anchor, had the lights hoisted as usual, an' in ten minutes we were steamin' away at full speed just as shipshape as if nothin' had ever happened."

"I suppose," said Trim as Dobbin paused, "that the girl was the daughter of the pirate captain?"

"Right ye are, lad.

"Our captain had surprised the fellers by comin' up to their island on the side away from the harbor where their ship lay. They had dwellin's on shore, or else he never could have made the capture he did.

"The Malays, never dreamin' of any such attack upon them, were wholly unprepared for it, an' so the theft of the girl had been managed without much difficulty.

"She had been found asleep, an' was bandaged with a chloroformed handkerchief before any of the Malays knew that any strangers were near; in fact, our men had made a good start from the village before some one made a discovery which aroused one of the enemy.

"As I have told ye, I never could make out exactly what happened then, for each of the men told his own story, an' they were that excited that there was no piecin' their stories together; it's enough for us to know that the Malays gave pursuit."

"And what happened after that?" asked Trim.

"Ye may well ask that, for the attack on me this afternoon was a part of it."

Trim made no response, but looked steadily at Dobbin, who returned the gaze solemnly, and continued:

"The Malay girl was locked into a stateroom, an' once the *Dunmore Castle* was on her way again, the second officer had all he could do for the rest of that time in lookin' after the captain's wound.

"We had no surgeon on board, for we carried no passengers, but every officer knows somethin' about nursin', an' Jones managed to bandage up the captain's wound an' put him in pretty good shape.

"It was a painful wound, but not a dangerous one, as it proved.

"The next mornin' we were of course far away from that island, an' were makin', as we thought, toward Singapore.

"It was about the middle of the afternoon followin' the abduction when the captain waked up.

"He had gone to sleep about daybreak, after the second officer had doctored up his wound.

"He was feelin' purty well, an' as I understand it, he told the second officer to bring the girl from her stateroom to his cabin.

"I know this, that guarded by two of the men who had been in the abductin' party, she crossed the deck to the captain's room.

"The second officer went in with her.

"As she walked I remember well how she looked the vessel over, seemin' to take

in every man of us as if she was photographin' our faces.

"I think she was the most beautiful woman I ever saw.

"She was a Malay, that was sure enough, but no white queen ever walked with a prouder step, an' no one ever seemed more able or determined to take care of herself.

"The captain's room on the *Dunmore Castle* was on the hurricane deck just abaft the chart room.

"It was the only house on that deck, an' back of it was the funnel.

"I and others of me shipmates were on the fo'c'sle top at the time, an' you may believe that we kept our eyes glued upon the hurricane deck opposite.

"It was thirty seconds after the Malay girl had gone into the captain's room when there was the sound of a pistol shot.

"Instantly the door was thrown open an' the girl dashed out closely followed by the second officer.

"She had a pistol in her hand, an' as I understand it, she had grabbed it from a rack that hung just above the porthole of the captain's room the minute she entered.

"She had shot the captain through the heart.

"A bos'n an' two or three sailors who were on the main deck ran to help the second officer.

"Between them all they overpowered the girl an' took the pistol from her, an' just then one of those things happened that are always likely to happen at sea an' that no mortal man can explain; somethin' went wrong with the shaft.

"The steamer was stopped instantly, an' the engineers of course went to work to repair damages; now ye may believe that there was a purty excited time on board.

"The captain was dead.

"The first officer, who had had no hand in the abduction, an' who in his heart undoubtedly didn't approve of it, was in command.

"The Malay girl who had done the murder was a prisoner.

"The second officer, of course, had to take his orders from the first, so you may see the situation.

"One of the leaders in the abduction was dead, an' the other was called to task by a superior officer who had no hand in it, while the steamer lay there helpless on account of the damaged shaft.

"The first officer made an inquiry into the matter; he summoned all of us who had been in the crew that abducted the girl to the after deck an' asked questions.

"The girl understood English evidently as well as her own tongue.

"If I live to be a thousand years old, I shan't forget the way she looked at us fellers who had been concerned in the scrape.

"There's no doubt that she was makin' up her mind then that she would know us wherever she met us, an' that she would have revenge on every man of us.

"The first officer was badly troubled; I know that he wanted to put the second officer in chains.

"I think his first thought was that he would lock us all in the brig, but it must have been clear to him that the common sailors were not responsible in any way, an' besides that, all hands were needed to run the ship.

"A tramp steamer, as ye know, doesn't employ any more sailors than is absolutely necessary.

"Fully two hours were taken up in the first officer's examination. He was slow about it, for he took a report in writin' of what every man said.

"He had us all sign it or make our marks after our statements.

"At last he turned to the Malay girl an' said: 'I shall have to take you to port an' turn you over to the authorities, although I want you to understand that I regard your action as justifiable.'

"'I demand,' says she, coldly, 'to be taken back to my home.'

"'I can't do that,' he answered; 'but I shall give you as fair treatment as possible. I shall be obliged to keep you under guard, but I'll not have you in irons.'

"Thereupon he ordered the chains to be taken from her, an' this was done.

"She was told that she might remain on deck, if she liked, or go to her stateroom. In either case she was to be constantly under guard of two sailors.

"She said she would remain where she was.

"It was about this time that a sailor came up to the first officer an' reported a vessel in sight astern.

"The first officer looked at her through a glass. There was no need for him to tell the rest of us what that vessel was.

"It was the Malay pirate that we had our fight with before. It was just as plain as day that the Malays had started immediately after the abduction an' to follow us.

"That they had been able to come up anywhere near us was due to the fact that our ship was damaged an' we were lyin' still. Then I can tell ye there was an anxious time on board.

"If the Malays had fought desperately before, what would they do now when their captain's daughter was a prisoner in our hands?

"Word was sent to the engineer to tell him that the shaft must be repaired instantly so that we could make some kind of headway.

"His reply was that he was workin' as fast as he could.

"The pirates had evidently made us out an' was comin' toward us. Of course the fact that the captain had done a great wrong couldn't be thought of now.

"There was no doubt that the pirates wouldn't listen to reason or that they wouldn't be content with the surrender of the girl, so preparation was made for a defense.

"The pirates kept comin' nearer an' nearer. Once in a while I caught sight of the girl an' I saw the light of triumph in her dark eyes.

"The air seemed to be so full of excitement that we could hardly breathe. The *Dunmore Castle* lay there disabled, motionless, while the pirate was drawin' nearer an' nearer.

"At last, when she was within a quarter of a mile, the welcome throbbin' of our propeller was heard, an' our steamer slowly began to go ahead.

"Every man Jack on board set up a wild hurrah! I tell ye, lad, we had no mind for another tussle with the pirates under the circumstances, an' were glad enough to feel that we was goin' to slip away from them.

"Many of the men fairly hugged each other in their joy. The relief was so great that ye can understand how it was that the two who were guardin' the girl missed their duty for a bit.

"The first they knew of their mistake was when they saw the girl speed to the rail an' leap overboard.

"As she had been standin' on the after part of the deck she was immediately astern.

"The first officer saw what had happened, but after swearin' a bit he declared that it was the best thing that could have happened.

"'She'll be picked up,' said he, 'an' we'll have no troublesome freight to carry.' He was right.

"The girl could evidently swim like a duck, for she struck out an' easily kept afloat until she was picked up by the pirates upon which was her relatives an' friends."

"Did the pirate attempt to pursue you?" asked Trim.

"No. She hung about in sight durin' the rest of that day, but by next mornin' we could see nothin' of her an' I never set eyes on the craft again; but that wasn't by any means the last that I knew of her.

"The captain was buried at sea, an' the first officer made some kind of a report at Singapore.

"What it was I don't know. Me an' me shipmates was examined by the consul, an' it seems none of us went back to the *Dunmore Castle*, but most of us shipped on the same vessel.

"It was some time before we got a berth, an' before we left Singapore somethin' had happened that gave every man of us a sober turn.

"The second officer of the *Dunmore Castle* was detained on shore by the consul to await further examination. He was allowed to go free about the streets on bail.

"One night he was murdered. There was nothin' so much in that, perhaps, an' yet we all believed it had somethin' to do with the abduction of the Malay girl.

"From that time on, lad, death by violence has awaited every man of that

boatful that went to the island to capture her.

"I'm the only man who has escaped. There isn't the slightest doubt in me mind that that girl has made it her life work to kill off all who was concerned in her capture.

"It was years ago, an' for at least three years I've been feelin' that her pursuit of vengeance was given up.

"This thing that happened this afternoon shows me that she's still at it, an' it's my belief that she an' her men will make it hot for you because you stood in the way of the final act in their scheme."

CHAPTER IV.

DOBBIN ON GUARD.

"Well," said Trim, "you're too old a man to be frightened by anything I might say, but I can't help thinking that it would be better for your health if you had stayed on the *Malta*."

Dobbin shook his head.

"I'm not afraid of the varmints," he answered. 'They may get me in time, but if they do—well, a man can die but once. Meantime it's you that I'm anxious about."

"I shan't lose any sleep worrying," retorted Trim.

It was then late and they retired for the night. Trim had arranged that Dobbin should occupy a room adjoining his own.

Neither was disturbed during the night.

Shortly after breakfast the following day they went to the court where the Malay prisoner would be examined.

They found there that the police had captured two of the deserters from the *Malta*, and that they had also arrested two or three other Malays on suspicion that they were implicated in the strange plot.

It must be remembered that no one connected with the *Malta* or among the government officials knew Dobbin's story.

When the case was reached in court the magistrate who had charge was informed that the police expected presently to arrest other Malays who might be concerned in the matter, and the inquiry was therefore adjourned until afternoon.

It came about in this way that Trim had to wait most of his day in or around the court room. At last, however, he gave his testimony, and Dobbin was also called.

The old sailor believed that there would be no possible use in his telling the long story of the *Dunmore Castle*, for he could not identify any of the Malays in court as having been connected with the pirates he had encountered years before.

He simply testified that he had reason to believe that certain Malays were hostile to him, and he expressed his emphatic conviction that those in court would murder him if they got a chance to do so.

He refused to make any further explanation, and the result was that the man who had attempted the direct assault was held for trial.

The deserters were punished and the Malays who had come alongside in a boat were warned to leave the colony.

As Dobbin said afterward to Trim, this was as much as could be expected.

It seemed that the Malays had a boat in the harbor to which they had gone after the unsuccessful attempt at murder.

It was there that the police found most of them. They promised to sail away, and before sunset their boat had gone out of Table Bay and headed to the eastward.

After the court proceeding had been settled, Trim engaged a hansom cab for a short drive about the city. It was too late in the day for a long excursion.

He took Dobbin with him, and when they returned to their hotel a hall boy approached Trim and said:

"There's been a gentleman to see you, sir, hand Hi think he's hin the reading room now."

"Who was he?" asked Trim.

" 'Ere's 'is card, sir."

Trim took the card and read:

HORACE TERRELL,
South African Railway Co.
General Offices.

"That's a new name to me," said Trim to himself. "I wonder who he is and what he wants?"

"Shall I take you to 'im, sir?" asked the servant.

Trim nodded and was conducted to the reading room, which was on the floor

above the office. Dobbin followed hesitatingly.

"I don't feel like lettin' ye out of my sight, lad," he said.

"There's no reason why you should," responded Trim. "I dont imagine that this call means anything private."

The servant looked into the reading room and found it empty.

"Perhaps 'e's stepped hinto the parlor," the servant remarked. "Hif you'll wait 'ere a moment Hi'll look for 'im."

Trim and Dobbin accordingly went into the reading room. The old sailor took a chair in a corner and began to look over the marine news in a paper.

Trim stood by a window opposite the door looking into the street until he heard a voice saying:

"That's Mr. Carter by the window, sir."

He turned about then, and saw the servant pointing him out to a young man who was entering the room.

This young man was well dressed and dignified in appearance. His face was grave and yet not unpleasant.

He seemed at first glance altogether like one who would be either a good companion or a careful business man, according to circumstances.

As he crossed the room Trim noticed that his gait was not perfectly steady. He walked quickly and apparently with ease, and yet one foot dragged after the other in a curious fashion.

"Mr. Terrell has the queerest limp I ever saw," thought Trim as he advanced to meet the caller.

"I'm looking for Mr. T. C. Carter," the gentleman said presently.

"That's my name," said Trim. "You are Mr. Terrell, I suppose?"

"Yes, at your service, although, if I may speak plainly and without preface, I hope that you will presently be at mine."

Mr. Terrell smiled as he said this, and Trim instantly formed a good impression of him.

"I think I shall like this fellow," he said to himself. Aloud he asked:

"Do you mean that you have some kind of business in hand?"

"You have guessed it, Mr. Carter. Shall I tell you about it here?"

Mr. Terrell glanced at the corner where old Dobbin was poring over the newspaper.

"You can speak as freely before him as if he were not in the room," said Trim. "He's my chum."

"Your chum? Ah, then I take it he is the sailor whose life you saved on board the *Malta* yesterday."

"Well," answered Trim, "I suppose he is the one you refer to. It seems to me that all Cape Town has heard of that affair."

"Yes," responded Terrell. "It's in everybody's mouth and you are regarded as a good deal of a hero, Mr. Carter."

"I didn't do anything," returned Trim, "that any other man wouldn't have done if he happened to be standing just as I was near the assailant."

"That may be, Mr. Carter, but aside from that some of us have heard that it's quite your way to do such things, and that you're one who can be depended on to exercise not only courage, but unusual shrewdness in dealing with men."

"You seem to have heard a good deal."

"Yes. You are not the only passenger who left the *Malta* to remain in Cape Town for a time, and one of them happened to mention to the president of the South African Railway Company, by which I am employed, that he had got acquainted with you on shipboard, and he told us something about your detective work in Sydney."

Trim nodded.

"He gave a very good account of you, Mr. Carter," continued Terrell, "and the president was greatly interested."

"Indeed!"

"And this passenger informed us that it was your intention to put in a week or so in this colony."

"I thought I'd stay over at least one steamer."

"The president hopes that you may be induced to remain longer."

"Indeed!"

"Yes. The fact is, Mr. Carter, we are in great need of just such services as you can render."

"You seem very sure of it."

Terrell laughed good humoredly.

"We couldn't help being sure of it," he said, "because we have reason to be-

lieve that this passenger who had told us about you was not exaggerating your ability——"

"And the long and short of it is," interrupted Trim, "that you want to employ a detective. Is that it?"

"That's it exactly, Mr. Carter. Can you accept a case?"

"That depends——"

"On terms, of course."

"No, that's not it," exclaimed Trim. "I take it for granted that the South African Railway Company would pay a reasonable bill for detective services, so that that isn't what I was thinking of."

"What was it, then?"

"What kind of a case is it?"

"Oh, you want to know what kind of work you'll have to do before you will undertake it. Is that it?"

"Certainly."

"I suppose, then, that you are a specialist, and that there are some classes of detective work that you would not care to handle?"

Trim felt a little annoyed at this question, although he could not have told why. He knew, in fact, that he was not a specialist, but that, on the contrary, he had not had enough experience in detective work to lay claim to skill in any direction.

It seemed to him that it would be better to be frank with this man, and so he said:

"I'm on my way home, where I expect to begin regular detective work. I don't make any pretense of it as yet. You can see for yourself that I'm not a very old man."

"I do see that," returned Terrell, very pleasantly, "and I remember that we were informed that your work in Sydney consisted very largely in trapping extremely dangerous criminals. Now, the work that we would like to have you do here is not exactly of that description."

"I should say that that was so much the better."

"I'm glad to hear you say so!"

"Well, then," said Trim, "you'd better let me know exactly what it is you want me to do——"

"The president of the company," interrupted Terrell, "gave me instructions to tell you as much as you insisted on knowing, and then if you consented to undertake the work for us he would see you this afternoon.

"He will wait at the general offices until six o'clock in the hope that I may take you there.

"I can see from this short conversation that you are business like and that you don't like to waste time in beating about the bush. Therefore I'll proceed at once to the kernel of the matter.

"The South African Railway Company, Mr. Carter, is losing money in the most mysterious way. I don't mean by that that the company isn't able to pay dividends.

"Its yearly profits are large, but somebody is managing to steal a good share of them and we are at an absolute loss to know whom to suspect."

"Have you had the books examined?" asked Trim, quickly.

"Oh, yes, and there is not a flaw to be found in them. I speak with some pride on that matter for the reason that my position in the company is such that I have general oversight of all the bookkeeping."

Trim nodded.

"I insisted myself that the books be thoroughly overhauled. I am proud to say that the president and other officers of the company were reluctant to do this, but I could not rest easy until it had been done, and the result is that they all feel that they must look somewhere else for the leak."

"Tickets and freight accounts seem to be all right?" asked Trim.

"They seem to be, Mr. Carter."

"Then, as I understand it, you want me to do some investigating for the purpose of finding the leak in the accounts?"

"But the accounts are all right, Mr. Carter."

"Well, then, you want me to find the leak, wherever it is?"

"Yes, that's it."

"You set me a pretty difficult task."

"We know that, but we believe that you can do the work."

"I should think," said Trim, "that some detective who is already acquainted in Cape Town could do this better than I

can, for I shall have to get acquainted with everybody employed by the road, and there must be men in Cape Town who already know many of them."

"True; but if we employ local detectives that fact is likely to get known. Now, you're a stranger here and you could do your work unsuspected, don't you see?"

"Yes, there's something in that."

"Then won't you let me take you to the president?"

Trim reflected a moment. The case did not look attractive to him at first glance. It was very different from any experience he had had before, and for that reason he decided to try it.

"This is a good deal harder puzzle," Trim thought to himself, "than any I had to tackle in Alaska or Australia, and it will do me good to take hold of it and learn how to think."

"I'll go with you," he said aloud, "and see what the president has to say."

He crossed the room to Dobbin.

"Ye're not goin' out without me, lad, be ye?" asked the old sailor.

"Well, old chap," responded Trim, kindly, "I was thinking of it. You're not afraid to have me go through the streets alone by daylight, are you?"

"Ye can do what ye will, lad," returned Dobbin, obstinately. "Ye can take me along or ye can go without me, but if ye go without me I shall tag on behind."

"If that's the way you feel, then, you shall go with me."

"That's right, lad. I tell 'ee we must stick together."

Dobbin accordingly accompanied Trim and Mr. Terrell to the general offices of the South African Railway Company.

The old sailor was content to sit in an anteroom, however, while Trim went into the president's private office.

Terrell accompanied him there and introduced him to an elderly gentleman who responded to the name of Hopkins.

"I'm glad to see you, young man," said Hopkins, motioning Trim to a chair. "After what I've heard about you, I'm sure that with your studying this matter we shall presently have an end of the thieving."

Terrell drew up a chair and sat down with them.

"How long has the thieving been going on?" asked Trim.

"So far as we can judge, for about six months—isn't it, Mr. Terrell?"

The latter nodded and answered:

"I should say about that."

"How many persons connected with the company," Trim asked, "are there who know that you thought of engaging me?"

"Only us two."

"Hasn't the idea been mentioned to any others?"

"Not to a single soul, unless, Mr. Terrell——"

"I haven't breathed it," the latter interrupted.

"Then don't," said Trim.

He then asked a number of questions about the amounts of the thieving and about the rules of the company, and so on.

He learned that the officers themselves were not at all certain as to how much had been stolen, and as Terrell had said, they were wholly unable to fix their suspicion upon any one.

The business seemed to be in perfect order and the regulations of the road were such that it appeared to be impossible for any one man or set of men to rob the road. Nevertheless, they were convinced that there was stealing going on.

The three talked the matter over for about an hour, and then Trim suggested that perhaps the best plan of operation would be found in employing him as private secretary to the president.

"That would enable me," he said, "to run around among the offices, or in fact go anywhere without exciting suspicion."

This idea was approved heartily, and it was arranged that Trim should come on the next day to begin his supposed duties.

The young fellow felt as he left the offices that he had undertaken the hardest kind of a problem, because there was absolutely no clew by which he could be guided in his investigation.

"How long do ye think of stayin' in Cape Town, lad?" asked Dobbin as they started back to the hotel.

"I can't tell," Trim answered; "but

I'm afraid you'll find it difficult to remain with me, much as I would like to have you do."

"Why, what's the matter, lad?"

"I'm going to do some work here that will keep me hustling by myself."

Dobbin looked very sorry.

"I don't see why ye want to go to work," he said; "and of all places in Cape Town. Why don't ye go on to London or New York, or somewhere where them Malays won't be prowlin' around?"

"I'm sorry you can't get the Malays out of your head, Dobbin," Trim responded.

They had no further talk about the matter then. In the evening both went to a theatre, and when they had returned to their hotel Trim sat in his room writing letters home for an hour or two.

Dobbin remained in his own room, but he did not go to bed. The door between his room and Trim's was open.

The old sailor sat in an easy chair before the fireplace thinking of the Malays and wondering how he should manage to protect Trim from trouble at their hands.

When Trim was ready to go to bed he looked into Dobbin's room and spoke to the old fellow.

"Eight bells," he said, cheerily. "You're off duty now, Dobbin."

"Nay, lad," the other returned. "It's still my trick at the wheel, I'm thinkin'."

"Well, if you think so, keep awake," said Trim; "but as for me, I'm going to turn in."

"God rest you," returned Dobbin, solemnly.

Ten minutes later Trim was sound asleep. Dobbin continued to sit before the fireplace thinking and worrying. There was no fire burning there to send a cheerful light about the room.

All was still about the house, and nothing could be heard from the street save the occasional rattle of a cab.

Dobbin had become so convinced that his young friend needed constant guarding that he was determined to stay awake all night.

He felt too anxious to sleep. His determination to stay awake, however, was one thing and his ability to do so was another.

The fact was that the old man was thoroughly worn out, and gradually he dozed until at last his head sunk forward, his chin rested upon his breast, and he snored lightly.

Dobbin was sound asleep.

A man accustomed to the discomforts of a bunk in the forecastle can sleep anywhere.

His cramped position in the chair did not make Dobbin's slumber any less sound.

He was too far gone in sleep to hear a scraping in the chimney that might have given him real cause for worry if he had been awake.

He did not stir when a bit of mortar fell from above into the fireplace.

He snored on, and when the scraping and rustling came nearer his eyes did not open.

When at last a pair of feet appeared in the opening of the fireplace and rested upon the brickwork back of the andirons there was a moment of deathly silence.

The feet did not stir. Dobbin snored on.

Then there was a light rustling noise, the feet changed their position, a pair of knees came down to the brickwork, and a dark form, catlike and wiry, crawled from the fireplace and stood erect in the room.

A beam of light cast into the room from a street lamp outside reflected with a flash upon something that the intruder carried in his hand.

He looked about the room for an instant and saw the sleeping figure in the chair.

He drew near and brought his face close down to Dobbin's. Then he straightened up and raised the hand that was carrying the gleaming thing.

With his hand in the air he paused for a moment and looked around. His eyes fell upon the bed.

There was light enough in the room for him to see that it was empty.

Then he saw the open door connecting with Trim's room.

The hand that held the glittering thing aloft slowly descended to his side, and the intruder stepped across Dobbin's out-

stretched feet and stealthily made his way toward Trim's room.

CHAPTER V.

A GLIMPSE OF THE FOE.

In Trim's room the light from the street lamps threw a bright beam upon the wall and ceiling, leaving the further corner, where the bed stood, in comparative darkness.

The intruder paused at the threshold to get his bearings. Across the beam of light he could see the outlines of the bed and the bunched-up coverings showing that the bed was occupied.

With his knife again raised he started foward, moving with his feet very close to the floor and gliding rather than walking.

At his first stride his feet caught against something and a chair fell over directly in his path. It came down with a great clatter.

Dobbin awoke instantly and sprung from his chair. He made for Trim's room with as much speed as if he had not been asleep at all.

"God help us!" he exclaimed, "I knowed somethin' would happen, an' here I've been dozin'."

There was dreadful fear in the old sailor's heart as he rushed across the room, but with it he felt a wild hope that the noise might have been caused by Trim himself. His hope vanished the moment he reached the threshold.

At that instant the intruder, who had stumbled against the fallen chair, had regained his balance and was leaping across the beam of light in the middle of the room.

Dobbin saw the upraised hand and the glittering knife.

"Trim, lad, wake up!" he cried in an agony of fear as he, too, dashed across the room.

The form on the bed remained motionless.

Dobbin was too late; he saw the intruder bend over the bed and bring his knife down with terrific force, driving it straight through the bunched-up coverings.

Dobbin cried aloud with rage and grief.

"Oh, my poor lad!" he groaned, "so I think that I should have fallen asleep at such a time!"

Before the old sailor had reached the bed his cry was aswered by an exultant laugh, and the intruder, who had half risen after his fearful blow, swayed in the air, threw out his hands wildly, and then fell full length upon the floor.

Dobbin was well nigh paralyzed with astonishment. He was none the less amazed when he heard Trim's voice shouting:

"Nail him, Dobbin! Don't let him get up!"

In the dim light the old sailor saw the hilt of a knife sticking up from the bedclothes and saw the form of a man writhing upon the floor.

If it had not been for the darkness and his excitement he would also have seen Trim crawling as hastily as possible from under the bed.

With a confused notion that Trim's shout must have been his death cry, Dobbin fell upon the man on the floor in a well-meant effort to overpower him.

The old sailor had plenty of muscular strength, but little agility. He could have pulled upon a line as well as many a younger man, and could have lifted as much dead weight as any other, but when it came to a wrestle his joints were too stiff with age.

The man on the floor proved to be exactly Dobbin's opposite in this respect; he not only had great physical strength, but he was as supple as an eel.

The sailor had hardly got his hands upon the fellow before there was a complete overturn.

Dobbin felt himself seized around the waist and rolled completely over, and before he could scramble to his knees his antagonist had bounded across the room to a window.

"Thunderation!" cried Trim, who by this time had got from under the bed, "don't let the rascal get away!"

With one hand the would-be murderer raised the window and with the other tore a wooden bracket from the wall and hurled it across the room toward the bed.

Trim was just arising from the floor, the bracket struck him squarely upon the forehead, and he staggered back dazed and helpless.

The next instant the intruder had disappeared through the window.

Dobbin, still paralyzed with fear and astonishment, made one halting step toward Trim.

"After him!" the boy gasped, faintly.

The sailor accordingly ran to the window and looked out; he could see the figure of a man rapidly going down the side of the house much as if he were a fly and able to walk on wall or ceiling.

"Lord bless us!" exclaimed old Dobbin, "it must be the old Harry himself!"

Then an idea came into his rather slow thoughts, and he seized the first thing his hand touched upon the bureau near the window and threw it after the would-be murderer.

It was an ordinary crockery cup; it missed its mark and broke in a hundred pieces on the sidewalk.

By that time the man it was meant for had reached the ground and darted away.

It was just then that Trim, reeling from the effects of the blow on his forehead, staggered to the window and looked out.

"Lad! lad!" cried Dobbin, "if ye're not dead, ain't ye dyin'?"

Trim laughed, but there was disappointment in his tone.

"It takes more than that to kill me," he responded; "but I'd give a good deal if the rascal hadn't got away."

"It was all my fault," said Dobbin, humbly.

"Don't you fret yourself," retorted Trim; "you couldn't have done any differently; it is perfectly clear that this fellow is an exceptional man. I never saw anybody so wiry and quick in his movements."

"I shouldn't have went to sleep," protested Dobbin.

"Well, there's no harm done, old fellow."

Trim would have said more to comfort the sailor but that they were interrupted then by a loud knocking at the door.

The night clerk, disturbed by the racket, had come up to see what was the matter.

Trim, who was fully dressed, let him in and briefly explained what he knew of the situation.

They struck a light and speedily made out how the intruder had got into the room.

The pieces of mortar in the fireplace, as well as tracks of dirt from that part of Dobbin's room toward Trim's, told the story.

"It wasn't until just as I was ready to turn in," said Trim, "that it struck me that it would be just as well to be prepared for trouble.

"I knew Dobbin was worrying about the Malays, and I thought myself it was possible that they might try to put up some job on me; so I put the pillows of my bed under the coverings. Then I tied a stout cord to the door buffer on the wall and attached the other end to that heavy chair.

"This made it certain that if anybody should come secretly in from Dobbin's room he would stumble and awake us both. I crawled under the bed and went to sleep.

"I was broad awake the minute the chair fell over, and I knew it could not be Dobbin who had come into my room, for I heard him jump from his chair in the other.

"So I lay still until I heard a blow on the bed above me. Then I reached out and caught hold of a pair of legs. I gave them a big yank and the fellow fell over.

"We would have had him, I think, if I could have got out from under the bed quicker, but I couldn't, and there you are."

"I don't believe any mortal could have caught that fellow," remarked Dobbin, solemnly.

"Why not?"

"If there ever was a fiend," replied the sailor, "I fancy he was one. He went straight down the side of the house as easy as I would go down a ladder."

"I reckon you're a bit excited, Dobbin."

"So I was, lad; but I know what I seen."

"He is probably right," said the clerk, coming to the window; "some time ago we put up an American lightning rod, and it runs close by this window to the roof."

Trim also went to the window and satisfied himself that his assailant had gone

down to the street by clinging to the lightning rod.

"That part of it is explained," he said to himself, "and I shouldn't wonder if that should prove to be a clew; it isn't one man in ten thousand who could make his way down in that fashion.

"It wasn't any fiend, Dobbin," he said aloud; "it was a human being, but a very unusual one."

"Yes," answered Dobbin, who had been reaching out of the window and feeling of the lightning rod. "Them Malays——".

"It wasn't a Malay," interrupted Trim.

"Bless your soul! who else could it be, lad?"

"That's what I'm going to find out."

"Going to tell the police?" asked Dobbin.

Trim shrugged his shoulders.

"I'm going to do everything that can be done," he said, "to get that fellow under lock and key before morning."

"Then I'll go with 'ee."

Together they left the hotel and began a series of inquiries that occupied them for several hours.

Naturally there were not many people abroad at that time of night, but it happened that there were two or three in the vicinity of the hotel who had seen a man hurrying away.

Trim questioned them as to the direction he took, and then took as nearly the same course as he could.

By frequent repeating of his questions from other persons he met, he traced the fugitive to a tough part of the town near the docks. There he lost the scent entirely.

All around them were narrow streets and alleys that ended generally in dark courts.

It was an ideal place for a criminal to play hide and seek in.

Trim was at a loss for a moment as to how he should continue.

"Better give it up, lad," suggested Dobbin, anxiously, "an' get out of this 'ere town by the first boat you can get."

"No, no," answered Trim, sharply "there's more depends upon my getting that man than you think for."

"All right, lad, I'll stick to 'ee, then."

In the course of his pursuit through the streets Trim had had time to reflect upon the matter. He felt certain at the start, as he had told Dobbin, that his assailant was not a Malay.

His main reason for this was that the fellow had neglected an opportunity to murder Dobbin, who was the one upon whom the Malays were trying to get revenge.

"If it had been any of the Malays," was the way Trim put it to himself, "he wouldn't have risked losing Dobbin for the sake of getting a stab at me first; therefore, if it wasn't a white man it must have been somebody who hadn't anything to do with the Malays."

From this as a starting point, Trim reasoned that the assault must have been committed by one who wanted revenge upon him for something that had occurred in the past, or who feared him for something that might happen in the future.

Trim could think of nobody connected with his Australian investigations who could possibly be in Africa at this time; in other words, he could not believe that the assault was intended as revenge.

The only other reason for it must lie in his undertaking to discover the frauds in the South African Railway affairs.

"I've heard of shrewd criminals," he reflected, "but I must say that this seems to take the cake, for I've hardly been engaged upon this case before an attempt is made to do me up.

"Now, only the president of the company and the chief of the bookkeeping department know about me; that is, I suppose they are the only ones.

"At the same time, there were plenty of men who saw me go to the president's office yesterday afternoon. Among them may have been the guilty party, and he may have suspected that I was a detective who was about to be employed on the case.

"Acting on that suspicion, he may have made up his mind that I'd better be put where I couldn't possibly do him any harm.

"If I could only find out who this man is who tried to kill me, I'm thinking that I should be a long way toward discovering the railway thief."

"What be 'ee goin' to do next, lad?" asked Dobbin after they had stood at a street corner for about a minute in silence.

"I'm going to make a bold play," Trim answered. "I'm going to go right in among the dives that are scattered hereabout and let it be plainly understood who I am and what I'm after."

"That'll put every rascal in Cape Town upon his guard," suggested old Dobbin.

"I reckon every one of them is on his guard now," remarked Trim, "and what I hope to do is to scare my man out of cover. Come on."

Followed by Dobbin, Trim led the way to a low saloon half way down the block.

A party of men, evidently sailors, were inside, singing at the top of their voices. They subdued their tones the moment Trim entered and looked at him and his companion inquiringly.

"Well, pardners," said Trim, nodding in a familiar way to the group and dropping into his frontier dialect, "every man yere is my friend, an' every man will step up to the bar an' name his pisen. 'T's my treat, an' when we've got acquainted I'll ask yer some questions which ye'll answer straight, if ye're true men."

There were not less than a dozen men in the room. They looked at the lad in astonishment, and for a moment there was silence.

"I reckon yer know what I mean," continued Trim, putting a gold coin on the bar. "Thet stands for the drinks—see? Every man name his stuff an' drink hearty."

There was no need for further invitation. The men crowded up to the bar and were presently naming and receiving their liquors.

"I fancy you're an American," said one of them.

"I hail from the States," Trim answered. "I reckon some of yer hev been thar."

"Hi've been to New York," said one.

"Hi've seen every port on the Atlantic coast," added another.

"Thet's almost es good es meetin' a fellow countryman," exclaimed Trim.

"Now, then, drink hearty, an' I'll tell yer what's up with me."

The men poured down their drinks and gathered closer to Trim, their eyes filled with eager curiosity.

"Somebody in this yere town," said the boy, "hes tried to do me up to-night, an' I'm a-layin' for him."

He paused after this remark to observe its effect upon the faces around him. They were watching him intently.

"The galoot didn't get in his work," Trim went on, "but he came pretty nigh it, an' the worst of it is he got away.

"Now, I'm thinkin' that some of yer fellers might give me a tip as to who he is."

"See 'ere," growled the bartender in a surly tone, "don't you come in 'ere to make a row. There's nobody but 'onest folks as come to this 'establishment, an' Hi won't 'ave any row, understand?"

"Stow that talk, Billy!" exclaimed one of the customers. "This young gentleman ain't for havin' any row. Let's hear what he has to say.

"How can we give you any pointer, young man, when we don't know nothin' about the feller what tried to do you?"

"I can tell yer somethin' about him," Trim responded. "An' ef you're acquainted with Cape Town yer might be able ter give me the best kind of a pointer."

"Well, what was the feller like?"

"I didn't see any more of him than his feet, but he did one thing that I don't believe thar's any other man in Cape Town could do."

"What was that?"

"He went down the side of the house by grippin' the lightnin' rod."

"Ah!"

The men in the crowd looked at each other earnestly.

"Now, then," said Trim after a slight pause, "yer'll find me square. I'll make it pleasant fer any man that'll give me a hint es ter the feller thet did thet."

"Take this talk outside!" commanded the bartender, angrily.

"Hold on, Billy," said the customer who had acted as spokesman for the party. "Let's see about this."

"Get outside, every one of you!" the bartender insisted.

"That's all right," said Trim; "we'll go outside, gentlemen."

And with this he started for the door.

Most of the others followed him, but one or two remained behind talking with the barkeeper in low tones.

The spokesman put his hand on Trim's shoulder and said in a whisper:

"Hi say, young fellow, 'ave yer 'ad any trouble with Jemmy Miller?"

"Never heard of him," Trim responded. "Who is he?"

"'E's a steeple jack, an' 'e's the only one in this part of the country, an' 'e could climb any steeple that was ever put up."

"He must be the man!" exclaimed Trim.

"'E was in 'ere not twenty minutes ago."

They were just then passing through the door to the street. Trim heard a light noise at the further end at the saloon that caused him to turn around.

He saw a man dart from behind a pile of casks and rush out of the side door.

"See yere!" Trim exclaimed, whirling the spokesman about. "Is that him?"

"That's 'im!" replied the spokesman, excitedly.

Trim immediately dashed back into the saloon and made for the side door. The bartender leaped over the bar and blocked his way.

Trim gave him a blow with his fist upon the jaw, but he was in too much of a hurry to make the blow very effective.

The bartender staggered a bit, but threw his arms around Trim and held him back. It was only for an instant.

He had hardly taken hold before he let go, started back against the bar, and fell to the floor.

Dobbin had run after Trim and had caught the bartender with all his force directly under the ear.

The two or three others who had lingered in the room when Trim started out stepped forward as if they too would obstruct the young fellow, but by this time he had whipped the revolver from his pocket.

"Stand aside, there!" he commanded.

There was too much business in his looks and tones for anybody to disobey. His passage was clear, therefore, and he went on to the side door.

The slight delay proved to have been enough. The fugitive had locked the door behind him. There was therefore another delay while Trim and Dobbin burst the door down.

They found themselves in a dark alley. Two men were running in from the street end.

They proved to be the spokesman of the sailors and one other.

"'E didn't go out this way!" cried the spokesman. "Chase 'im up to t'other end."

Trim turned toward the other court at the end of the alley and ran with all his might. It was but a few yards before he came to the end.

An oil lamp was burning dimly in one corner. It gave light enough to show that the court was empty.

Again the would-be murderer had escaped him.

CHAPTER VI.

TRIM'S QUEER EXPERIMENT.

Trim was not at all discouraged by the outcome of his inquiry. It served his purpose to know who his assailant was almost as well as if he had captured the fellow.

The fact that Miller, the steeple jack, had run away as soon as the clew to his identity had been disclosed, was proof enough to Trim that he was the guilty party.

It was therefore more important now that he should find out all that could be learned concerning Miller's associates than that Miller should be captured.

"It'll be easy enough," thought Trim, "to get hold of the steeple jack now that we know who he is.

"The first point will be to find whether he is employed by the South African Railway Company; if he isn't, and it is a hundred to one that he isn't, the next thing will be to trace his movements through yesterday and last evening, and so find out if possible who put him up to the job of trying to murder me."

It seemed to Trim as if victory was already in his hands, for the way to act was perfectly clear.

Once let him find that Miller had had

any conversation with an employee of the railroad company during the day or evening before, and he would be able then to fix his suspicions upon that employee as the one who had been doing the wholesale thieving.

Of course it might prove, and it probably would prove, that more than one was concerned in the thieving.

That part of the problem could be attended to later. The main point now was to fix upon some one person who could be proven to be connected with it.

With this thought in mind Trim went to police headquarters and reported what had occurred.

He said nothing whatever about the railroad company, but simply asked the police to run down Jemmy Miller, a steeple jack, and to find all that could be learned about his movements during the previous twenty-four hours.

This the police, of course, promised to do, and Trim, feeling that there was nothing more that needed his attention that night, returned to his hotel.

Although neither he nor Dobbin had any fear that another attempt would be made upon them, it was a long time before Trim could get to sleep.

He was racking his brains to think how the dishonest employee of the railroad company could have guessed at his business there.

He recalled the faces of all the men he had seen in and about the president's office, and tried to remember whether any of them had given any significant glances or done any little thing that might lead to suspecting one or more of them.

It seemed like a vain problem, and more than once Trim determined to drop it, and let the matter clear itself up through discovering a clew by means of Jemmy Miller's movements; but as often as he tried to dismiss the matter, just so often it came back to him, and he continued to puzzle over it.

All of a sudden he sat bolt upright in bed, excited by the conviction that he had hit upon the solution of the whole affair.

It was such a strange thought that at first he could hardly believe that he was awake.

"I must test this," he said to himself. "It's true that I have had a ball and chain tied to my feet, but it was only for a little while, and at that time I didn't think of how it made me walk. I was busy with other things then."

Quivering with excitement at the thought of his possible clew, Trim arose and dressed. He struck a light, and looked about the room for something with which to experiment.

Presently he went to the fireplace and picked up one of the andirons.

"It was heavier than this," he muttered.

Then he took them both in his hands and tested their weight.

"I reckon both together will do," he thought.

He took them from the fireplace to the middle of the floor and tied them together with the cord with which he had tripped his would-be murderer.

Then he tied the other end of the cord around his ankle. This done, he stood up and proceeded to walk across the room, dragging the irons with him.

"Well, what in all creation be 'ee doing now, lad?"

This question came from Dobbin. The old sailor had heard the lad moving about the room, and being still fearful of trouble, he had arisen quickly and came to the doorway between the two rooms where he stood looking on with amazement.

"I've got it at last, old fellow!" cried Trim.

"Lord save us! but I'm afeard ye have, lad!" returned Dobbin.

"Afraid of what?" asked Trim, stopping short in his walk.

Dobbin sighed heavily and touched his forehead with his forefinger.

"Poor lad," he said, "ye've had so much trouble an' excitement that it has turned yer mind. Sorry I be for 'ee."

Trim laughed heartily, and started across the room toward his friend dragging the clanking andirons after him.

"Ah! ah!" said the old sailor, shaking his head sadly. "That I should have lived to see so brave a lad go daft."

"Dobbin," said Trim, seriously, "I'm

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* Trim was thinking of an event in his Australian experiences that is told in "Trim on the Safety Valve" in No. 7 of the NEW NICK CARTER LIBRARY.

not half as daft as you are; I tell you I've made a discovery that will save me possible weeks and weeks of hard work.

"Now just watch me walk and I'll tell you all about it."

Dobbin watched him while Trim marched up and down the room several times.

The old sailor was puzzled by the boy's apparently sane remarks and by his equally insane conduct.

"Do you see, Dobbin," Trim asked presently, "how impossible it is for me to walk steadily?"

"Ay, I see that," responded the sailor. "How could ye expect to take a decent man's stride with them flummajigs fastened to yer feet?"

"I couldn't!" returned Trim.

"But now, then, Dobbin, suppose that for several years I'd had these what-you-may-call-'ems tied to my leg in just this way: don't you suppose that forever afterward my gait would likely be crooked?"

"I'm thinkin'," responded Dobbin, slowly, "that you'd likely have a bit of a limp just through the habit of it."

"That's it, exactly," exclaimed Trim; "that's just what I was thinking of.

"I don't believe a man could go about with a ball and chain for five years without forever after that having a peculiar halt in his steps."

"I should think that would be likely," said Dobbin.

"That being the case," returned Trim, "we'll drop experiments and go to sleep again."

With this he untied the andirons, replaced them in the fireplace, and made ready for bed.

Dobbin shook his head solemnly, still doubtful as to his young friend's sanity.

Trim was now able to go to sleep at once, and his last thought before unconsciousness came was that next morning he would set about making inquiries as to the past career of Horace Terrell.

If it should only prove that Terrell's strange limp was due to his having served a long sentence as a convict, there would then be plenty of reason for fixing suspicion on him as the railroad thief.

Trim was awakened early by a knock at the door. He found that a bell boy had brought him a letter that was to be delivered immediately.

It had not come through the post office, but had been left at the hotel by a messenger. It was addressed to

"The Young American Detective."

"I s'pose it's meant for you, sir," said the bell-boy.

"I reckon it is," Trim responded, shortly, and closed the door.

He opened the letter at once and read as follows:

"Sur: i noes how yer on ter mee an' i hern tel how yer capchur evary Body yous Lay fur—If i had don you last nite it wood hav Bin all rite butt i didn't an now i noes that yous will ketch mee befour long. I'm going too git cleer uv you an lett yer no all about itt. i dun that job last nite 'cause i wuz a frend uv thee malays who hadd itt in fur old Dobbin. that's the truff. thare ain't kno uther reason why i shud hav dun itt accept thatt i wuz drunnk. i no that exkuse wont du mee kno gud now an sew i'm goin tu giv upp the chase. look att sant lukes stepel az sun az yer git thiz.

"JEMMY MILLER."

Trim read this queer letter through twice and then put it in his pocket.

"Dobbin," he called, "are you getting up?"

"All ready, sir," came the prompt reply from the other room.

"Do you remember," asked Trim as Dobbin came in, "whether when we were driving yesterday we passed a church named St. Luke's?"

"Don't recall it, lad," Dobbin replied. "We seen a good many churches."

"It seems to me," said Trim, "that the driver pointed out one as St. Luke's, but it made no impression on me at the time. Let us go and take a look at it."

"What's got into ye now?" cried Dobbin as he followed Trim from the room.

"I'm interested in that church. That's all."

Dobbin groaned.

He saw further evidence that his young friend had lost his mind.

"What should he be wantin' to go sight seein' for before breakfast?" muttered the old fellow. "He's in a very bad way, an' it's all the more me duty to

look after him. I shan't let him out of me sight for one second, I shan't."

Trim paused in the hotel office to ask how far away St. Luke's was. It proved to be about a mile and Trim accordingly ordered a cab. This was brought around presently and he and Dobbin got in.

When they had come to the vicinity of St. Luke's Church they saw that something had happened to arouse the interest of passers in the street.

They were looking up into the air and collecting in little groups here and there.

Trim ordered the driver to stop and alighted.

He found himself in front of a church with a very tall spire. He looked up as others were doing and saw a sight that gave even his cool nerves a shock.

The spire was surmounted by a gilded cross, and from one of the arms of this cross a human body dangled and swayed in the wind.

"Lord bless us! What's that?" exclaimed Dobbin, aghast, as he too looked up.

Trim's face was very grave as he took Miller's letter from his pocket and read it again.

"I wonder if it can be possible," he thought, "that this fellow has actually climbed the steeple and committed suicide in order to escape me?"

He shook his head as he read the note, then he looked up into the air. There the figure hung as plain as anything in sight.

"What came over Jem Miller to do that?" said a surprised voice at his side.

Trim turned and saw that two gentlemen had paused and stood near him with their eyes fixed on the spectacle above.

"Excuse me," he said; "but is it possible you recognize that body at this distance?"

"No," the gentleman responded, excitedly; "but there's only one man in the whole colony who could climb that steeple and do that, and that's Jem Miller, the steeple jack.

"It must be him, and I was wondering what could have driven him to suicide."

Trim again looked at the letter.

"Miller was not drunk last night," he said to himself, "and this statement that he tried to do me because he was a friend of the Malays is all rot.

"If he has committed suicide, as seems certain, he has taken pains to switch me off the right track. He wants me to think that it was the Malays at the bottom of last night's attack, and I don't believe it."

He folded the letter again and put it in his pocket, still puzzling over the situation, when he saw a man approaching in whom he was deeply interested. It was Horace Terrell.

As Terrell made his way along the sidewalk Trim kept his eyes upon the man's feet. He noticed carefully the halting gait, the way one foot dragged after the other.

"As if," he said to himself, "there was still a ball and chain attached to it."

"Ah, Mr. Carter," said Terrell, pleasantly, as he came up. "This is a ghastly spectacle, is it not?"

"Very," Trim returned, shortly.

Trim was not yet prepared to bring his attack directly against Terrell, and he therefore said nothing more at the time.

It was his purpose not to arouse any fear in Terrell's mind that he was suspected, so he talked indifferently with Terrell, who spoke of the suicide as any other man might have done.

They presently found themselves surrounded by various persons who were connected with the church. They were all talking of what had occurred and were debating how the body should be taken down.

It seemed that there were one or two other steeple jacks in the colony, but that there was none who had ever climbed this particular spire except Miller; in fact, when some repairs had been necessary a few months previous, Miller was the only one in that part of Africa who would undertake the job.

Of course it would not do to let the body hang there longer than was necessary, and if a staging should be built around the spire so that ordinary workmen could go up, two or three days would be consumed.

The church members were exceedingly anxious that the body should be taken down at once.

They talked of telegraphing to other towns to see whether any steeple jack could be found who would venture up the spire for the sake of a heavy reward, but as none others had been induced to go up before, it did not seem likely that any would try it now.

Trim listened to the discussion for a few moments and then approached a gentleman who seemed to be the chief man of the church, and said:

"I'm not looking for any reward, but if you'd like to have me climb that spire and take the body down I'll do it."

CHAPTER VII.

TRIM AS A STEEPLE JACK.

"My dear fellow," exclaimed Terrell, "that would be a most dangerous effort! You must not think of risking your life in that way!"

It seemed to Trim as if there was something more than mere anxiety in Terrell's eyes as he spoke. It looked very much as if the man with the strange limp were pleased at the thought that the detective was going to try to climb the steeple.

Trim, however, did not press Terrell with any questions, but kept his eyes quietly fixed upon him while he made his arrangements for the climb.

"The quickest way out of this job," thought Trim, "is to force Terrell to expose himself, and I can only do that by the boldest kind of a trick."

The lad was fully determined upon his course and nothing could have shaken him from it.

The church members stared at him in surprise and asked him if he had ever been a steeple jack.

"No," said Trim, "I haven't, but I've done some pretty tall climbing in my day, and I know that I can get up to that cross if I have the right kind of tools."

"That's just it," said the leading man in the group. "You're not provided with climbers such as Miller used, and without them you can do nothing."

"Quite true," Trim responded; "but I propose to get an outfit of climbers within an hour."

"How will you do that? There isn't any other steeple jack within a hundred miles of Cape Town."

"I'll borrow a set from Miller," responded Trim.

"Borrow from Miller?" retorted the leading man, scornfully. "What crazy talk this is! With Miller hanging up there three hundred feet aloft, how are you going to borrow anything from him?"

"If Miller made a business of steeple-climbing," replied Trim, calmly, "it's pretty likely that he would have more than one set of climbers."

"Yes, I suppose it is."

"I'll go to his lodgings, then, and find a set. Of course I shan't try to climb the steeple unless I can get the tools, but if I can get them and have your permission to do so I'll tackle the job."

Trim's suggestion that he could find a spare set of climbers at Miller's lodgings put a new light on the matter.

The church members dreaded the though, of letting a green man climb this spire, with the possibility that he would fall when part way up and thus lose his life, but they also disliked to have that ghastly spectacle before the eyes of the city; and after some further talk, therefore, they told Trim to go ahead.

Terrell listened to the discussion earnestly. He occasionally put in a word or two as if to persuade Trim not to undertake the job, but his arguments were evidently half hearted, and at last he said:

"Well, Mr. Carter, I presume that if I were in your place I should do as you are doing. It will be a new feather in your cap if you succeed."

"I shall succeed," Trim answered; "but of course I couldn't hope to if there was anything wrong with my feet."

There was a slight flush on Terrell's face at this, but he was perfectly self possessed as he responded:

"There's where you have the advantage of me, Mr. Carter. I injured myself by a severe fall when I was a youngster and I've never been able to walk perfectly straight since."

"Excuse me for referring to it," exclaimed Trim.

"Oh, don't mention it. You couldn't have helped noticing that my gait is a little crooked."

By this time there was a considerable

crowd in front of the church, and a small squad of policemen came up to keep the street clear.

Trim made himself known to the sergeant in charge of the squad, and asked if anything had been learned by the police concerning Miller's movements the day and evening before.

"I don't think there has," the sergeant replied, "but you'll have to go to headquarters to find out for certain."

"There's no hurry about it," said Trim, "as long as Miller is up there in the air, but perhaps you can tell me where he lives."

"Oh, yes!" and the sergeant proceeded to give Trim the street and number.

"That's quite a distance from here," remarked Terrell, who had overheard the conversation.

"No matter," Trim responded. "I've a cab with me."

"Oh, indeed! And are you going to drive directly to Miller's?"

"Yes."

"Have you any objection to taking a passenger?"

"Not the slightest, Mr. Terrell: Come right along. There'll be three of us, but the cab has plenty of room."

Accordingly Trim, Dobbin, and Terrell got into the cab and were driven across the city to a tenement house not far from where Trim had got on to Miller's tracks the night before.

Nothing of consequence was said during the drive. Terrell talked easily about the dangerous feat that Trim was about to attempt, and frequently expressed his hope that the young detective would come out of it without broken bones.

When they arrived at the place where Miller lived all three got out and mounted two flights of stairs to a room that the janitor told them had been occupied by Miller for several weeks.

They found the door locked, but the janitor opened it for them when Trim told him that Miller had committed suicide and thus they had come to get climbers, if they were to be found, for the purpose of taking down the body.

The room they entered was a plainly furnished bedroom. There is no need to describe it, for the reason that the articles Trim wanted were in plain sight.

On the floor in a corner were the spikes which the steeple jack was in the habit of fastening to his feet and the belt which he wore around his waist, as well as a rod with a hook at the end with which he pushed a rope above him in the process of climbing.

Trim said nothing, but as he picked up the spikes he examined the points carefully. He found things exactly as he had expected to.

"Aren't you going to take the hook with you?" asked Terrell as Trim started from the room with the spikes and belt in his hand.

"No," Trim answered. "I've got a better way of climbing than that."

They returned to the cab, and on the way back to the church stopped at a hardware store, where Trim bought a quantity of small but very strong rope.

There was a bigger crowd than ever about St. Luke's when they arrived there.

As they were making their way through the throng to the church door Trim whispered to Dobbin:

"I've left something at the hotel that I want. Jump into the cab, get it, wrap it up in paper so that it won't be recognized, and hand it to me without letting anybody see what you have."

"All right, lad," returned Dobbin. "What is it I'm to get?"

"A spyglass that you'll find in the top of my traveling bag."

"Bless your heart, lad! Can't ye see with the naked eye——"

"Don't breathe a word, Dobbin. Go and bring it to me as I tell you."

"I'll do it, lad."

Puzzled and worried almost out of his senses, Dobbin went back to the cab and did as Trim directed.

The sexton led the way into the church, where Trim consumed a good deal of time in putting on the climbers and the belt. He did this in order to give Dobbin time enough to get to the hotel and return with the spyglass.

Terrell stood by until Trim was ready to mount, then he said:

"I shall have my heart in my mouth, Mr. Carter, until I see you safe on the ground again."

"Are you going to stay in the crowd and look on?" asked Trim.

"You may be very sure I shall."

"It'll be a long job."

"Nevertheless," returned Terrell, emphatically, "I shall not leave this place until you've done with it."

Dobbin came in just then and slipped a parcel into Trim's hand unobserved.

"Good-by," said Trim, gayly.

"I'd like to go with ye to the top," cried Dobbin. "I'm afeard ye'll never come down alive."

"Well, perhaps I shan't," responded Trim, gravely, "and if I shouldn't I'd better give you one or two directions, old fellow."

"I'll do whatever ye tell me, lad."

The sexton and Terrell and one or two others who stood by withdrew to the farthest side of the vestibule in which they were standing, for they believed that Trim was about to give some last instructions to his companion.

This was just what Trim wanted.

"Dobbin,' he said, taking the old sailor by the hand and acting as if he was giving a last farewell, "you're on to the man with the queer limp, aren't you?"

"You mean Mr. Terrell, lad?"

"I do."

"Him as stands over there?"

"The same."

"What about him, lad?"

"I want you to keep your eyes on him all the time I'm up on the steeple, do you understand?"

"I don't know why——"

"Never mind why, Dobbin. Do as I tell you and you'll be giving me the biggest kind of help."

"Then I'll do it, lad."

"Watch whatever he does, follow him wherever he goes, but don't let him see you if you can help it."

"I'll look out, lad. But what if you should fall——"

"I shan't fall."

And with another grip of the hand Trim turned away and began to mount the staircase that led to the base of the spire.

"I shan't care much," he thought, "if Terrell does get on to the fact that Dobbin is shadowing him, for that will make him all the more likely to expose himself."

A few moments later Trim appeared in the belfry of the steeple, and the great crowd that had gathered below held their breaths as they saw him prepare to begin the dangerous climb.

He had the rope which he had brought fastened to his belt, and he held a coil in one hand as he stepped out from the belfry.

The first thing he did was to throw the coil as if it were a lariat over a beam that stuck out from the top of the belfry.

True to its aim, the rope wound itself around the beam and Trim promptly climbed up hand over hand. Presently he was astride of the beam and looking upward for something else to throw the rope at.

Almost every steeple has ornamental projections near its base. This was no exception. With his skill at throwing the lariat, it was therefore child's play for him to make the first part of his climb.

He simply threw the rope around one beam end after another, and climbed up until he came to the point where the spire went straight up into the air as smooth as a walking stick. Then he rested for a moment.

Trim was already so far aloft that no one on the ground could tell exactly what he was doing. With a little caution, therefore, it was easy for him to take out his spyglass and direct it at the upturned faces below.

In a moment he had caught the face of Terrell. He was standing in the outer edge of the crowd and directly behind him was the faithful Dobbin.

Among all the spectators there was none that looked more anxious than Terrell.

Rising carefully to his feet and coiling his rope for another throw, Trim prepared for the really dangerous and difficult part of his task.

As he did so he saw the marks in the surface of the spire that had been made by Miller's climbers when he went up during the night.

"I reckon," he thought, "that I can put my spikes in the same holes and so get along easier."

The most dangerous thing he had to do in the whole task was to throw the rope. This required him to lean a trifle outward, so that he was almost off his balance.

The effort of throwing the rope would be likely to make him lose his balance

entirely. He knew this and therefore acted with the utmost caution.

Clinging to the spire with his left hand as well as he could, he gave the rope a toss upward. His skill in this exercise served him well.

The rope shot up and wound itself completely around the spire a few feet above his head. He gave it a strong pull and found that it held. Then, before beginning to climb up, he once more directed his spyglass to the crowd below.

He saw Terrell walking rapidly away.

"That's it," thought Trim. "He's satisfied now that I'm going to go on and he's not going to lose any more time."

Trim replaced the spyglass in his pocket, and digging his spikes into the holes already made by Miller, slowly climbed to the point where the coil had wound itself around the steeple. Then he unfastened the coil and gave it another throw upward.

The rope held, although the loop was but a couple of feet above his head. Nevertheless that allowed him to climb just so much further up. Then he rested a minute, using the time to look again through his spyglass in the direction in which Terrell had gone.

He easily picked out his man, for from that height Trim could see along many streets. Terrell's limp would have given him away even without the aid of the spyglass. He was making down a long street that led to the docks. Putting up the spyglass, Trim continued his dangerous climb.

When he was about three-quarters of the way up he was so exhausted that he had to coil the rope hard about the spire and then let his weight rest upon it for several minutes.

During this time he searched all the streets in view with his spyglass. At first he could find no trace of his man.

At last, however, he saw Dobbin lounging in a doorway far down near the water front. A minute later he saw Terrell come out of a building and start again toward the church.

"If I'm not mistaken," thought Trim, "that is a shipping office that Terrell has just been in. I mustn't lose time."

Again he uncoiled the rope and threw it aloft. Following the same method, he went up fifteen feet more, when again he had to pause to rest. Then for the first time since he had begun to climb he looked sharply at the ghastly figure suspended in the air above him.

"I reckon I've gone far enough," he said to himself, and with his spikes thrust into the spire and his left hand clinging to the rope he drew out his revolver and aimed upward.

The crowd below watching breathlessly could not tell what he was about. The thousands of spectators, therefore, were immensely startled when a moment later they saw a little puff of smoke at Trim's hand, followed by a sharp report.

Then a cry of horror went up from their throats.

The lad had shot so that his bullet cut the rope that held the suspended body, and the body was falling to the ground.

"Oh, what an outrage!" everybody thought. "It's awful enough to have that corpse hanging there, without allowing it to fall to the pavement, where it will be bruised to a pulp!"

Most of the men present turned their heads aside, overcome by the sickening spectacle. They heard the thud of the body as it fell to the pavement, and then gradually they approached the spot where it lay. As they drew near their sickening feeling turned to indignation, amazement, and in some cases to laughter.

What they found was not the mutilated body of a man, but a suit of clothes stuffed with straw.

CHAPTER VIII.

UNDER THE WHEAT.

Word that a dummy had been fastened to the cross went from mouth to mouth in the crowd.

When the spectators looked upward again they saw Trim descending. He did not use his rope now, but came down step by step, fixing his spikes in the same holes that had been made in going up, and clinging to the side of the spire much like a fly on a wall.

It was still a dangerous task, but Trim kept his head through it all and arrived at length at the belfry top, where he let himself down by his rope.

Then he fired another shot to cut the rope that he had knotted on the beam above him, and entered the belfry.

Shortly afterward he was in the vestibule of the church once more, receiving the congratulations and thanks of the church members.

"What a shame!" they said, "that you should have had such a dangerous climb all on account of a hoax."

"That's all right," said Trim, who was hurriedly taking off his spikes. "That hoax has served me a good turn."

The people would have detained him, for there was talk of raising a purse as a reward, but Trim waved them aside.

He pressed through the crowd and there found Dobbin, who had just driven up in a cab.

"Thank the Lord, lad!" cried the old sailor, "that you're well out of it."

"I'm glad you've got a cab, old fellow," said Trim. "Jump in and let's hurry away."

This they did, and when the driver had whipped up he said:

"What about Terrell?"

"I followed him to a shippin' office," replied Dobbin, "an' after he came out he got into a cab an' I lost sight of him. I got the first cab I could find an' tried to give chase, but I failed.

"I can't feel very sorry about it, for I was that anxious about 'ee that I couldn't follow your orders as well as I wanted to.

"It's all right, Dobbin," returned Trim. "It's just as well as if you had kept Terrell in sight all the time."

"What do 'ee want of him, anyway?"

"He's one of the biggest criminals in South Africa," returned Trim, "and I want to get him locked up."

Dobbin's mouth opened in amazement at this, but he said nothing. He was too much bewildered by his young friend's actions even to think of a question.

Trim had the driver take him to the shipping office that Terrell had entered. He went in himself and asked in a business-like tone if a vessel could be chartered for a long voyage.

"Certainly," said the man behind the counter. "What kind of a vessel do you want and when do you need it?"

"Anything will do," Trim replied, "if I can have it at once."

The shipping agent smiled.

"You're in a good deal of a hurry, too, aren't you?"

"Yes; but what do you mean by that?" retorted Trim, sharply. "Has somebody else been hiring a vessel in a hurry?"

"Well," returned the agent, "I shouldn't have spoken as I did. I'll see what can be done for you."

With this he consulted a book that lay upon a table back of him.

"I don't see," he said in a moment, "that I can fit you out inside of four or five days."

"That won't do," Trim responded. "Isn't there any vessel lying in port now that can be had?"

"They are all chartered."

"Well, wouldn't it be possible to take up the charter of one of them?"

"I think not, but you might try."

"Well, tell me what vessels there are here that you control and I'll see what I can do."

The agent named half a dozen. One was loading with manufactured articles, another with fruits, another with cotton, and so on. The agent concluded:

"There's the *Osprey*, half filled with wheat. But I'm pretty sure you cannot get her, so I wouldn't try."

"What's the matter with the *Osprey*?" Trim asked.

"Well," was the response, "she'll be sailing within an hour, I think."

"All right. Then I'll see what I can do with the others."

Trim hurried out to his cab.

"The *Osprey*," he said to himself, "half filled with wheat and sailing within an hour. I reckon that's the boat I want to go to."

The agent had mentioned the docks at which the various vessels were lying, and Trim directed his driver to go as fast as possible to the one where the *Osprey* was. As they approached it they met an empty cab coming away from it.

"See here, Dobbin," exclaimed Trim. "Is that the cab that Terrell took?"

"I ain't got much of an eye for horses an' wagons," returned the sailor, "but I'm thinkin' that that's the same driver."

A moment later their cab stopped at the entrance to the dock. A policeman was standing near and to him Trim said:

"I'm a detective employed by the South African Railway Company. I'm going to make an arrest on board the

Osprey. Telephone to headquarters or to your station and have half a dozen men sent at once, for there may be trouble."

He did not wait to hear the policeman's response, but followed by Dobbin hurried at once down the dock.

The policeman, convinced by Trim's business-like manner, promptly hurried to the nearest police signal box and gave the request to headquarters as Trim had asked him. The request was attended to, for the officials at headquarters of course had heard about Trim and at once suspected that he was the person who asked for assistance.

A patrol wagon was accordingly started at once for the *Osprey* dock. Meantime Trim and Dobbin hurried up the gangplank to the main deck of the vessel.

Trim went directly to the captain's cabin. It was empty. He opened the doors of the few staterooms and found them empty also.

"He's here somewhere, and don't you forget it!" he muttered.

"Perhaps he's in the fo'c'sle," suggested Dobbin.

"No, he's not," exclaimed Trim as a sudden thought occurred to him. "We must make for the hold."

"This way, then," cried Dobbin, running up the companionway to the deck.

More familiar with ships than Trim, the old sailor led the way to the main hatch. Just as they arrived there half a dozen sailors were preparing to put the hatch down.

They were working under command of an officer, who looked at Trim and his companion with surprise.

"Don't stop for explanations, Dobbin, but come along!" cried Trim.

Before the officer or any of the sailors could interfere he had knelt by the open hatch, let himself down, and dropped to the depth below. Dobbin followed him.

It was rather dark down there, and at the first instant Trim could see nothing clearly. Then he found himself confronted by a savage-looking sailor who attempted to knock him down.

Trim easily parried the fellow's blow and leaped for his throat.

He clutched the fellow's windpipe and pushed him backward.

Trim was choking his antagonist into a state of helplessness when he was seized by a man in officer's uniform, who sprung from the darkest part of the hold. Dobbin laid hold of this new antagonist and pulled him away from Trim.

The latter perceiving that he had more foes than one to fight with, shoved his man from him so violently that he fell upon his back.

Instantly then Trim faced about and gave the officer a smash with both fists upon the mouth that settled him for the time being, and then he had to face others who were dropping down into the hold just as he had done.

This was comparatively easy, for he now had time to draw his revolver.

"Kill the scoundrels!" roared the voice of the captain from above.

"Come down here and take a hand in the game yourself!" retorted Trim.

The captain had no desire to do anything of the sort.

His eyes were now accustomed to the darkness and Trim could see his foes clearly. There were only three of them in the hold besides the three whom he and Dobbin had overcome at the start.

Trim passed one of his revolvers to Dobbin and remarked:

"We'll hold these fellows here for a few minutes, and if the police don't come we'll clean out the ship!"

"What do you want here, anyhow?" bawled the captain from above, who hardly dared to look into the hold for fear of getting a ball in his head.

"We want you to surrender a man who is traveling under the name of Horace Terrell!" shouted Trim in reply.

"He ain't on board!" said the captain.

"That's a lie!" retorted Trim, "and the sooner you give orders to have him brought to light the better it'll be for you."

The captain stormed and raged, vainly commanding his men to enter the hold and clean out the two men who had taken possession.

No one would obey, and while he was still raving like a maniac the patrol wagon from headquarters arrived and several policemen hurried on board.

In the presence of the uniformed law officers the captain became suddenly quiet.

"It ain't any business of mine, anyway," he muttered. "I'm acting under orders, and if you can find your man on board you can take him away and I'll be well rid of him."

Trim began to feel about in the wheat with his hands, and in less than half a minute he had uncovered Horace Terrell.

"Well," said Terrell, "it wasn't easy to breathe under all that wheat, but you'll have a hard time, young fellow, in proving anything against me."

"You're a bluffer to the last," retorted Trim, "and I'm going to call that bluff right here."

Terrell looked at him defiantly.

"You got that limp of yours," said Trim, slowly, "by wearing a ball and chain, and before this day is out I shall have your record as a convict——"

The call succeeded. Terrell trembled, stammered, and presently broke down.

There is no need to go into the details of his confession. It was not a complete one, and Trim had some work left before him to discover the full extent of the ex-convict's frauds.

He discovered that Terrell's method of robbing the railroad company was by adding a shilling a week to the pay of every man employed on the railroad.

The men received exactly their wages. Terrell took the extra shilling and charged the men on the books with the full amount that he had drawn for the pay roll. In this way the books appeared to be absolutely correct.

The case was spoken of as one of the most clever swindles ever known in the colony.

When Terrell had been advised by the president of the company to employ the young American detective he had made up his mind that he would be discovered. He therefore did his best to have Trim put out of the way by bribing Miller, the steeple jack, to kill him.

When this attempt failed he planned to delay Trim by having the dummy hung to the cross on the church spire hoping that Trim would do just what he did—that is, climb the steeple to take the supposed body down.

Terrell had calculated that this would give him time to leave the country.

He had paid the shipping agent a big sum of money for the use of the *Osprey* on the condition that it should stop loading and sail at once.

Trim's investigations, together with Terrell's confessions, showed that he had served an eight years' sentence on the Andaman Islands for similar crimes committed in Bombay. It was there that he got his fatal limp.

What became of Jemmy Miller was for the time a mystery, though Trim came across him again before he left Africa.

"I suspected that that was a dummy from the start," he said, in discussing the case with President Hopkins.

"I don't see how you suspected that," said the president.

"For these reasons," Trim responded: "In the first place, the note that Miller had sent me was evidently a fake. Then I had a suspicion that there were no spikes attached to the feet.

"It did not strike me that Miller would go to the trouble of taking off his spikes before hanging himself.

"If he had done so the spikes must have been on the ground at the base of the steeple. They were not there, and when I went to his room I found a set of spikes that had marks on them showing that they had been recently used.

"That settled it in my own mind. I climbed to the spire then just because I wanted to give Terrell a chance to expose himself by making an attempt to leave the colony.

"He came near being too quick for me, and he might have got away if it hadn't been that he went to his lodgings to get money and other things that he wanted to take with him."

The happiest man in the colony was old Jack Dobbin.

"I thought 'ee was daft for sure, lad," the sailor said; "but I know ye'reall right now, an' as long as 'ee stay in Africa I'll stick to 'ee, I will."

Trim was fond of the faithful sailor, and of course made no objections. They were together, therefore, in the next detective work that Trim undertook, which is described in "Trim in the Kimberly Diamond Fields," in No. 10 of the NEW NICK CARTER WEEKLY.

[THE END.]

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